



## St. Giles Junior School

### Attendance Policy

This document is to enable the Governing Body of the school to fulfil its statutory responsibilities under Section 175 and that the school complies with legal requirements regarding the Safeguarding of Children under the Education Act 2002.

Adopted by the Governing Body:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ *R. Sutcliffe* \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Governors

\_\_\_\_\_ Head Teacher

**Date:** December 2017

**Date of Review:** January 2019

**Date of Next review:** January 2020

## **WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 St. Giles Junior School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 Our policy has been drawn up after consultation with the whole community and is based on current government and Local Authority guidance and statutory Regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

### **2 SCHOOL'S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at St. Giles Junior School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

#### **2.2 Attendance Lead**

The Head teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work undertaken by the Family Learning Mentor in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

The Head teacher will also ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that a report is prepared for the governing body termly. (S)He will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

#### **2.3 Registration**

- i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session.

Class teachers (who take the registers) and office staff (who process the registers) are responsible for the completing the attendance registers using prescribed codes.

- ii) In the morning, the school doors open at 8.45am. Children arriving after 9.00am but before 9.15am will be recorded as “late before the registers have closed”. Children arriving after 9.15am will be recorded as “late after registers have closed”.

#### 2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked “no reason given” *unless* leave has been granted by the school *in advance* or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate.

Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable.

Where no reason is given by a parent/carer *after* 10 days, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.

- ii) St. Giles Junior School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child’s education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm.

If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at St. Giles Junior School will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children’s absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil’s home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised.

- iv) Absences will be authorised in the following circumstances:
- (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example:
- a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
  - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered.
  - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance
- (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
- (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand);
- (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions;
- (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs;
- (f) in other **exceptional circumstances** (e.g. a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent after a period of 10 days;
  - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
  - the pupil being taken shopping during school hours;
  - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, e.g. a birthday;
  - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
  - the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

## 2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

## 2.6 Staff training

The Attendance Lead will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

# 3. **COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

3.1 The Attendance Lead will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. (See para. above). The report should include commentary against the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group, class and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs, Looked after Children and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

# 4. **SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING AND IMPROVING ATTENDANCE**

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at St. Giles Junior School and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in classes. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

## 4.2 First-day calling

St. Giles Junior School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence or who may be absent without their parents' knowledge.

Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will leave a message for parents/carers to contact the school as soon as possible with a reason for absence.

If further attempts at contact are unsuccessful a letter is sent. If no reason is provided within 10 days, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

#### 4.3 School Strategies to Tackle Absence

The Attendance Lead is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that St. Giles Junior School intervene in non-attendance at an early stage.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence the school will invite parents to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the absences. Plans will be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them, i.e. medical evidence.

St. Giles Junior School will organise Attendance / Governor Panels to intervene in levels of non-attendance when parents will be invited to discuss the attendance issues..

#### 4.4 Referral to the Attendance, Compliance and Enforcement Service (ACE)

If there continues to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the ACE Service.

Regulations (Education Pupil Regulations 2006) require schools to inform the LA of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 10 school days or more.

Schools must also inform the LA of every pupil who fails to attend regularly which is interpreted to mean those pupils who have patterns of unauthorised absence without amassing 10 continuous absences.

#### 4.5 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school, and be in their classroom for registration, on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class, if they are late.

Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late.

A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other pupils with an emerging pattern of absence.

If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the ACE Service.

- 4.6 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes are logged as late in the registers. Persistent lateness is followed up via weekly monitoring of registers and a meeting arranged with parents by the Attendance Lead to discuss strategies to improve punctuality.
- 4.7 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the main office. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**
- 4.8 For the same reason it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day are signed out at the main office.

## **5. Children Missing from Education**

- 5.1 A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor unauthorised absence, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions.

At St. Giles Junior School we follow the DfE legal requirements for schools in respect of recording and reporting of children who leave school without any known destination.

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps\* have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to Warwickshire County Council's Children Missing Education (CME) Service.

\*Reasonable steps may include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits where safe to do so
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil / family

All contacts and will be recorded on the pupil's file

- 5.2 Upon receipt of a referral from the school, the CME Service will then continue to attempt to track the child, for at least a further 10 school days, using access to additional contacts/services, e.g. Housing. If this also fails to establish the pupil's whereabouts, the school will be informed by email and may then, but not before, remove the pupil from roll and place the child's name on the School to School database, entering XXXXXXXX in the box for destination. This will place the pupil on the list of Children Missing from Education.
- 5.3 Deletions from roll agreed with the CME Service will normally be backdated to the first day of absence. If the CME Service is able to contact the pupil and her / his parents, arrangements will be made with the school and family for a return to education, including a re-integration programme where necessary.

If the pupil has registered at another school, the school will delete the child's name from their roll and transfer the child's educational records to the new school in the normal way. Any child protection records will be transferred separately and securely for the attention of the DSL in the new school and a receipt secured.

Pupils leaving the school for known destinations outside the maintained sector in England and Wales will be updated to the School to School database using MMMMMMMM in the destination box. This includes private/independent schools, schools in other countries (including Scotland and Northern Ireland) and pupils moving into Home Education.

The latter will be formally notified to the Education and Social Work Service Home Education Officer by the school as soon as written confirmation is received from the parent(s).

If no confirmation is received the above Missing Children procedures will apply.

## 6. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- 6.1 The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.
- 6.2 The Head teacher **shall not** grant **any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application.
- 6.3 Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.

- 6.4 The Head Teacher will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted. At St. Giles Junior School, this will be a maximum of 10 days in any two-year period.
- 6.5 The school can only consider Leave of Absence requests which are made by the 'resident' parent.
- 6.6 Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice.
- 6.7 Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- 6.8 It is important to note, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child.
- 6.9 If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Warwickshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

**Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.**

*(Extract taken from Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service August 2014)*

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing using WCC model letters.

## **7 PARENTS' / CARERS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child).
- 7.2 St. Giles Junior School expects parents / carers to:
  - ensure their children attend the school regularly;
  - support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
  - not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

### 7.3 Parents/carers will also be expected to:

- notify the school on the first day of absence by telephoning the school, leaving a message on the school answer phone if necessary
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. The school will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

### 7.4 Exclusion From School

Exclusion is counted as an authorised absence. Parents are responsible for educating their child during the first 6 days of exclusion and the child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

### 7.5 Religious Observance

The school acknowledges the multi faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. The school will authorise absence on parental request for a day's absence for religious observance.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.

## **8 PUPILS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.

2.2 Pupils should attend school on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence.

## **9 GOVERNORS' RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Section 175 (2)

9.1 The governing body of a maintained school shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

## **10 PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REVIEW**

10.1 It is important to set realistic targets; these targets will be set in consultation with the LA.

The school will look at those interventions which have been successful as part of the evaluation process.

When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved
- Punctuality has improved
- Parental response to absence has improved
- Re-integration plans have been successful
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, governing body and the local community.
- Pupils are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and the attendance procedures operating within school
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons.

10.2 The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers
- Regularly analysing attendance data
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance
- Liaising closely with the Attendance Compliance Enforcement Service
- Recording carefully all telephone messages and retaining these.

Everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards.

Responsibility to promote attendance is the responsibility of the whole School.